
❖ The Passionist Heritage Newsletter ❖

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The Passionists in Kingsbridge and Riverdale, Bronx, New York Neighborhood and Architecture: Cardinal Spellman Retreat House 1967 to 2007

This issue of the *Passionist Heritage Newsletter* celebrates Passionist history in the Bronx from 1904 to 1967. The first article revolves around conflicting definitions of Passionist preaching, prayer, and solitude; their buying and selling of choice real estate in the Bronx; and the participation of Passionists in local Riverdale neighborhood planning. The other articles recall the first person memories of Father Columkille Regan, C.P. and Brother Conrad Federspiel, C.P. as Cardinal Spellman Retreat House was being constructed and before it was dedicated in 1967. Combined, their insights offer readers a new historical perspective on the immediate and long-lasting influence of architect Brother Cajetan Baumann, O.F.M. on retreat ministry, maintenance, and budget operations.

—Editor

“Beautiful Solitude Yet Within Easy Access of the City”

By Father Rob Carbonneau C.P.

At first glance, people are quite amazed by the bucolic and spiritual beauty of the modern Cardinal Spellman Retreat House operated by the Passionists at 5801 Palisade Avenue in the Bronx, New York. Yet almost no one knows that the Passionist Historical Archives shows serious discussions about the Passionist presence in the Archdiocese of New York were taking place as early as 1904.

Kingsbridge to Riverdale

Passionist author Felix Ward writes in *The Passionists* (1923) that the Passionists in 1905 were invited but unable to take on responsibility to minister at City Island, New York.



The Clafin Estate House, 1920s

Ward then explained his hope that the 1920s founding of St. Patrick's Monastery in Kingsbridge, Bronx “would equal its rival across the Hudson in spiritual influence,” a reference to the Passionist monastery in Union City, New Jersey. Writing in the genre of the era, Ward shied away from footnotes and precise dates but did his utmost to promote and boost the Passionist story and image.

More on the Kingsbridge location can be found in the *New York Times*. On December 11, 1920, it was reported the Passionists purchased about four acres of land for \$100,000. This included the “Eames house on the Clafin estate.” A July 25, 1923, article told how the exempt status of the Passionists and other organizations were being investigated in a city-wide sinking fund project used to insure redemption of debt. On August 7, 1924, a caption read: “Passionist Fathers Acquire Large Estate in Riverdale Area.” Brokered by Albert B. Ashforth and George Howe, like Kingsbridge, it was reported that the Passionists had every hope to build a monastery at Riverdale, which included water rights on the Hudson River.

Turning to the Passionist Historical Archives documentation offers the story behind the headlines. During the last months of 1919 the Passionists considered buying Bronx property on the Barney Estate at 238th Street and Riverdale Avenue and the Messiah Home on West Tremont Street before they selected the Victorian style Clafin estate house at Kingsbridge in April 1920. Kept between December 1, 1920, and November 5, 1924, St. Patrick's arrival and departure book reveals Kingsbridge was home to at least five Passionists who did regional preaching such as local leader Father Alexis Cunneen and future missionary to China Father Agatho Purtill.

However, on November 16, 1923, Archdiocese of New York officials learned that east coast Passionist Provincial Father Stanislaus Grennan sought another New York City site in the Riverdale area in part because Sedgwick Avenue did not allow the Passionists the space and solitude “to chant the canonical hours by day

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and night.” Grennan unashamedly voiced his desire that the proposed Riverdale site develop laymen’s retreats, operate a local devotional chapel and “[for] peace-sake...take charge of St. Margaret’s parish.” Admitting that the latter point was directly opposite to the view of the previous Passionist provincial, Father Justin Carey, Grennan made clear that leaving Kingsbridge for Riverdale was prompted by the United States visit from the Passionist Superior General from Rome, Father Silvio DiVeza, who “condemned the present site on Sedgwick Avenue as unsuited for our Monastic purposes.” With aplomb, Grennan thought that DiVeza might “consent” to the parish idea. In January 1924 the Archdiocese agreed with the Passionist plan to sell Kingsbridge, relocate to nearby Riverdale, and purchase the estate of Susan Allien. However, the Archdiocese would not permit the Passionists to initiate a laymen’s retreat or staff St. Margaret’s. On February 16, 1924, Grennan confidently wrote DiVeza of their plans to buy “about eighteen (18) acres of land, in beautiful solitude yet within easy access of the City,” in Riverdale, Bronx.

The remainder of the letter requested permission for the province to go into debt. While he hoped to buy the Allien site for \$250,000 and sell Kingsbridge for \$125,000 he also knew that a new Passionist monastery in Jamaica, Queens, New York was about to lead to a debt of \$200,000. Boldly, he sought permission for another \$200,000 debt for a new monastery in West Springfield, Massachusetts. This was the same time that Grennan urged increased financial support for the Passionist China mission begun in 1921 and was gingerly negotiating measured financial support for the Passionist mission to Germany begun in 1922.

In the end, prolonged negotiations led Kingsbridge and 14 lots to finally be sold in April 1926 to the Archdiocese for \$100,000. Included in this was Our Lady of Angels Parish which was being led during the negotiations by Pastor Francis A. Kiniry. In April 2007 I personally visited the old Claffin estate and former Passionist monastery, as it still serves as Our Lady of Angels Parish rectory, and was most pleased to obtain a 1999 history of the Kingsbridge site penned by Father Kevin J. O’Reilly.

The Riverdale property was bought in May 1924 for \$237,500. A January 6, 1926, blueprint done by G.C. & A.E. Wheeler Civil Engineers & City Surveyors, Fieldston, Riverdale, shows the Passionist land consisted of the former Allien home, a chapel, a frame garage and barn, a frame chicken house, a chicken run, rose garden,

lawn and two vegetable gardens.

Passionists in the Riverdale Neighborhood

Four events show the range of Passionist neighborhood involvement during from the 1920s and 1930s. First, on March 5, 1927, local Riverdale superior Father Sebastian Ochsenreiter, C.P. decided to co-operate with a class action defense of riparian rights on their waterfront Hudson property. The following list (see Table 1) and their respective assessment charges based on the lineal feet serve as a reminder that the Riverdale Passionists identified more with their rich and exclusive Hudson River neighbors than with the struggling urban poor of New York. In October 1927 Attorney John Jay McKelvey notified Ochsenreiter that the defense proved successful in defending the water grants held by the group and which the Passionists still retain in 2007.

Table 1

Property Owner	Lineal Feet	Charge
Elizabeth J. Cox, Walter Winchester Cox, Helena Cox and Ella B. Ellms	502	\$144.00
Estate of Isaac O Johnson	281	81
Mary M. McKelvey	260	75
Theresa Sheridan	136	39
Northern Realty Company, Inc.	392	113
Patrick Powers	274	79
Sisters of Charity (Seton Hall Hospital)	372	117
Stadacona Co. c/o Archibald Douglas	564	162
Eugene F. Delafield	191	35
Edward C. Delafield	287	83
John B. Delafield	287	83
Julia L. Delafield (Mrs. Longfellow)	250	72
Cleveland H. Dodge (Estate)	682	196
Percy R. Pyne	506	146
Estate of George W. Perkins	1636	470
Passionist Monastery	523	179
Colored Orphans Asylum	60	17
Mt. St. Vincent (Sisters of Charity)	1400	402

Second, because of the Passionist debt in the 1920s it was tempting to sell the Riverdale property. However, in 1927 the Passionists refused an offer from developers to buy the land "for an exclusive residential colony." Being members of the Association of Riverdale Property Owners, Grennan was aware that there was a proposal to have Riverside Drive come through the area, and if constructed, he expected the Passionist property "[would] be worth more than a million to us and [would]

be a good source of revenue" at some future date. In 1928 a client represented by the M.E. Springer offered \$400,000, but Grennan "could not think of selling unless we had another place in the New York Archdiocese and unless we got about a million for our Riverdale site."

Third, a fascinating blueprint in the Passionist Historical Archives shows that during the 1920s there was a proposal that would extend Riverside Drive from New York City through the Passionist property. However, this did not occur and their tranquil site was preserved.

Fourth, in 1939 the Passionists found themselves embroiled in the local Riverdale re-zoning dispute. On March 3 local Passionist superior Father Cyril Feeley thought it was appropriate to sign a petition in favor of the "G" zoning of Riverdale. Ultimately, Feeley would learn by way of the Riverdale-Spuytten Duyvil Property Owners' Association that a good many Riverdale landowners were opposed to the "G." In the process, he also became aware of possible local anti-Catholic prejudice. For example, on March 23 Joseph I. Berry, attorney for the Passionists and the local Visitation Convent, summarized an earlier visit by a Mr. Owen Murphy. According to Attorney Berry, Murphy reported that unless the



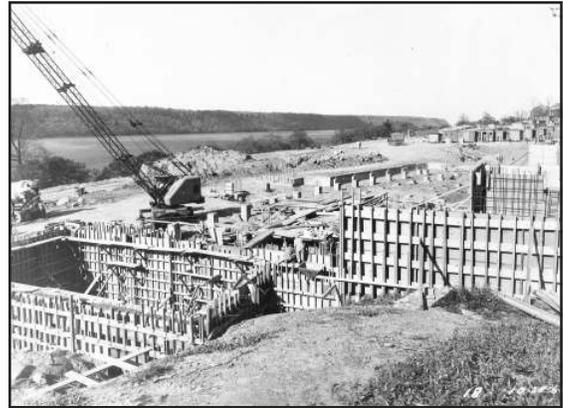
The Allien Estate House, 1930s

would agitate against religious orders being exempt from the payment of land taxes and stir up religious dissension; and further said that they (meaning the opponents of the change) would beat us anyhow. I replied," Berry continued, "that his arguments had no effect on me, and refused to advise the withdrawal of the consent." The point was moot, however. On March 20 the Archdiocese told Feeley that the Passionists were "to remain neutral" on the issue. Dutifully, on March 21 Feeley wrote the City Planning Commission of New York to withdraw his support of the "G" zone. In the end, the Passionists and the Visitation Sisters remained neutral.

From the 1940s on, the Riverdale community usually served as the tranquil home for five Passionists. However, the 1960s ushered in a time of change.

Father Columkille Regan, C.P.: 1960s Planning and Promotion at Cardinal Spellman Retreat, Riverdale, New York

Summarized by Father Rob Carbonneau, C.P.



Retreat house construction along the Hudson, 1965

Introduction

What was it like to be the first retreat director of Cardinal Spellman Retreat House? As part of the 40th anniversary celebration, Father Columkille Regan, C.P. agreed to sit down with me on April 11, 2007, and answer this question. Friends of Riverdale will agree that his candid thoughts offer a behind the scenes look at events leading up to the opening of the retreat house in 1967. My summary is based on notes compiled from the taped interview.

Passionists who gathered at the July 1959 Provincial Chapter recommended that the time had come to build a new retreat house at Riverdale. However, delays left it up to the members of the July 1962 Provincial Chapter to implement a plan. All knew the plan would fail unless the New York Archdiocese reversed its long-standing policy not to permit the Passionists to build a retreat house. Success came on July 28, 1962, at a meeting between Cardinal Francis Spellman of New York and Passionist Fathers Owen Lynch and Fabian Flynn. Skillfully, Father Flynn broached the topic of a retreat house, building upon his connection with Catholic Relief Services which had led to a friendship with the Cardinal. He even suggested the Passionists would name the facility after the Cardinal. This strategy, Father Regan learned later, was how they "got the green light" to build.

It started with a phone call

In July 1963 Father Regan was teaching at the Passionist Monastery in West Springfield, Massachusetts when he got a phone call from Passionist Provincial Gerard Rooney. Rooney told the professor he was to be sent to Riverdale as the new retreat director. Father Regan was told to first spend a year at Jamaica, New York to gain understanding of the nuts and bolts of running a retreat movement. By December 1965 Father Regan was living at Blessed Strambi Retreat as retreat director of the yet unbuilt retreat house. His first challenge was to face Passionist Father Bonaventure Gonnella, who had been living there and raising money, and who was under the impression that he was to be the new retreat director. “It became a very embarrassing thing” when Father Regan assumed the reigns rather than Father Gonnella. Father Regan had to overcome many hurdles to succeed in planning and promotion.

Challenges faced in building Cardinal Spellman

I personally lived at Riverdale from 1992 to 1995. This started me thinking about the architecture, so I invited Father Regan to answer some long-standing questions about this Passionist spiritual oasis in the Bronx.

•The retreat house is three floors. Is it true that the original plan was to build four floors?

Father Regan says yes. A major reason there is no fourth floor is that the Passionists “did not have the money.” Related to this, for example, were unexpected building costs such as putting wash basins into each retreat house room. While the older retreat houses of the past did not have this feature, the old guard Passionist Planning Commission—retreat directors and advisers; and Fathers Cosmas Shaugnessy, Lucian Ducie, Felix Hackett, Bonaventure Gonnella and Owen Lynch—debated the necessity of this for the spiritual experience of a retreatant and eventually agreed to the idea.

Realistically, a look back shows overall Passionist planning had reached a crisis in 1965. Father Regan suggests that Riverdale faced a financial dilemma, because it was the “last of many projects” that had come to life in the mid-1950s. The Passionists had expanded their overseas missions to Jamaica, West Indies, and the Philippines. Atlanta, Georgia was a designated mission for Black Catholics. Other domestic building programs included additions to the retreat houses in West Springfield, Massachusetts and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and new retreat houses in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts and Baltimore, Maryland.

•Why doesn’t the chapel have a view of the Hudson River?

Eager to answer this question, Father Regan first said that it was important to remember that the Riverdale architect was Franciscan Brother Cajetan Baumann, the first religious to ever be named to the American Institute of Architects. Father Regan had no problem with where the kitchen, dining room, and lounge were built. But the chapel was another story. “I could not believe that people sitting in the chapel could not look out on the Hudson River and the Palisades, which we know,” recalled Father Regan, “is never going to have any industrial or commercial construction. It was going to be pure nature. And I said to Cajetan, ‘why did you do that?’ And his answer—I remember it vividly—was, ‘Sacred space is enclosed space.’” According to Father Regan, the Archdiocese had a say as well. “That chapel, it was determined that it was not to be a separate building,” as was built by the Passionists at North Palm Beach, Florida. Rather, they said, “It must be inside the [retreat house] building because St. Margaret’s were scared stiff that they would cut into their flock.” Good relations between the Passionists and the Archdiocese remained a value.

•Were there any other challenges during the building process?

Father Regan thought there were several. One was the two pillars in the retreat house lobby: “I walked into that lobby when...the steel work was done and they began putting up the flooring. And I walked into the space that I recognized as the lobby, and I saw these two huge pillars right in the middle of the lobby. And I said to Cajetan, ‘That wasn’t a big span. Why have you got two pillars in the middle of the lobby? It is so small.’ He said, ‘we would have had the largest piece of steel supporting that area.’ I said, ‘why didn’t we?’” In the end, Father Regan recalls, Brother Baumann reasoned that, “it costs too much.”

Father Regan remembers Baumann “did put a beam to support that arch that was bigger than any beam that’s on the George Washington Bridge.” Speaking about when it was erected into place, Father Regan said, “They had to bring in two derricks. One derrick couldn’t have supported it.” As a result, the steeple is an “extremely heavy construction.”

Looking back, Father Regan says he “lost both fights” over the chapel and lobby because at that early stage he was more an observer than a participant as regards the

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Brother Conrad Federspiel, C.P.: 1960s Maintenance as Ministry at Cardinal Spellman Retreat, Riverdale, New York

Summarized by Father Rob Carbonneau, C.P.

Introduction

What was it like to do maintenance at Cardinal Spellman Retreat House? As part of the 40th anniversary celebration, Brother Conrad Federspiel, C.P. agreed to answer this question on April 6, 2007. Friends of Riverdale will agree that his insights breathe new life and understanding into the gospel-worn, concrete edifice on the Hudson River. My summary is based on notes compiled from the taped interview.

Rural Riverdale

Brother Federspiel recalls that he chauffeured some Passionists to Riverdale after he entered the Passionists in 1952. On his most memorable visit, he left Union City, New Jersey and traveled by car up the Palisades Parkway to Alpine, New Jersey. There, he took his car on board the Westchester Ferry. It landed near Getty Square in Yonkers, New York. The ferry discontinued service on December 16, 1956 because it could not compete with the accessibility afforded by the Tappan Zee Bridge, which had opened in 1955.

Riverdale was a short drive from Yonkers. He went down Broadway, past The College of Mt. Saint Vincent. Opposite 261st Street, he turned right onto Palisade Avenue in the Bronx. This brought him past the Hebrew Home. Begun in 1951, it was the former site of the Colored Orphan Asylum which had been the childhood home to singer Ella Fitzgerald. Entrance to the Passionist property required making a right turn at the original Allien estate horse stable. A short quarter-mile roadway hugged the terrain to bring him directly to the Blessed Strambi Passionist Residence. "The natural beauty of the place" captivated Brother Federspiel. There were "huge trees" and a stellar view downhill to the Hudson River. He remembers that there was a caretaker's house on the property "down near the bridge across the tracks."

1967

Brother Federspiel recalls being assigned to Riverdale in 1967. Construction was "quite advanced." He was assigned to work with the project overseer and clerk of

the works, Father Christopher Berlo, C.P. Born in 1902, Berlo professed his vows in 1921. He was sent to Germany to continue his studies and was ordained a Passionist priest in 1927. He remained in Germany where he was a major force in the building of the Passionist monastery at Meisberg, Schwarzenfeld in the 1930s. Quickly, Brother Federspiel recognized Father Berlo's keen eye for the details. Everyday, Father Berlo walked about the Riverdale site checking the delivery from each supply company. He wanted to make sure that each vendor "did not substitute or send inferior quality material."

During his first few days at Riverdale, Brother Federspiel recalls how Father Berlo "never said boo to me." Soon he got his first task: put the room numbers on all the doors of the retreat house. Brother Federspiel recognized the best approach was to devise a template system which allowed him to hang the numbers quickly. A couple of days later, Father Berlo asked him how the work was proceeding and was pleasantly surprised that it had been successfully completed. They hit it off. "I came under his wing," says Brother Federspiel. "From there on, I could talk his language." It was the same language that allowed Father Berlo to have the respect of the many artisans and electricians who worked in the building of the Cardinal Spellman Retreat House. These same workers asked Brother Federspiel if he was a union man. In the end they accepted his Passionist status with Father Berlo. When expected "discrepancies" arose regarding the blueprints, a call from Father Berlo to the retreat house architect Brother Cajetan Baumann held great weight. Many times original blueprints were reworked before the project proceeded.

Architectural challenges faced in building Cardinal Spellman

I personally lived at Riverdale from 1992 to 1995. I asked Brother Federspiel to answer my long-standing questions about this Passionist spiritual oasis in the Bronx.

- How would you describe Brother Baumann?
He was a skilled Franciscan architect whose offices were on Whitehall Street in lower Manhattan, New York City. Brother Federspiel found Brother Baumann had a "quiet approach." He was "low key" with "strong ideas." He had a definite architectural philosophy. He respected established building lines and opted to use modern building materials as exemplified in the retreat house tower and chapel.

- Were there any particular challenges during the

building process?

Brother Federspiel says he told Brother Baumann that early retreatants complained that it was too cold to sit by the dining room windows because of the winter winds of the Hudson. The Franciscan told the Passionist to simply “jack up” the thermostat because “oil is cheap.” Brother Federspiel remembers that, “Six months later, oil wasn’t cheap,” and has never been since.

He later was surprised to learn that the back tower was built without concern for the wind. As a result, Hudson River winds were a constant problem. This hit home to Brother Federspiel because he had previously worked in maintenance for the Passionists at Holy Cross Seminary in Dunkirk, New York, where he had first hand experience of Lake Erie winds. He also learned how the selection of the final steel design had been the subject of much debate between Father Luke Missett, C.P., a veteran member of Passionist province planning committee and ally of Brother Baumann, and Father Berlo. Even after the tower was completed, a group of young retreatants finally helped solve the wind problem by erecting aluminum and, later, glass panels. This prevented the winds from ripping the doors open.

The electrical system was another challenge. Early on, one worker informed Brother Federspiel that he had “never seen such a lousy way in which this building was wired.” Fifty-five of ninety-one rooms were wired incorrectly. Tempers flared at a meeting to resolve the issue, especially when it was learned that the blueprints did show incorrect wiring! To save money, it was agreed that Brother Federspiel would rewire the rooms, but only when every union man was off the property—to keep the peace. Often, he began work at 5:00 p.m., ate, and then went on to work till midnight till the job was done.

•How did they build the kitchen area in the back of the retreat house?

Brother Federspiel says the back loading dock was an afterthought because Brother Baumann envisioned that laundry and produce deliveries would arrive at the front door, then be loaded on the elevator and brought to the kitchen! Correctly, Brother Ignatius Bakish, C.P. complained. As a result, Father Berlo coordinated the effort to pour a concrete slab landing off the kitchen. This enabled as many as three trucks to dock and unload at the same time. Ever ambitious, Father Berlo presented a plan for a garbage shed in the back. Guido Civetta, stone mason on the project, responded to the challenge. After he had built the oval garden walls at the front entrance of the retreat center from stone trucked in from the mid-town Manhattan excavation site for the

Americana Hotel, he proceeded to craft the garbage shed from sculpted stone as well. Brother Federspiel tells how Father Berlo returned from a weekend away “surprised” to see that the project was completed.

•What about the bunker shaped building just off the back entrance roadway?

Brother Federspiel told how the original contractor would not warrantee the boiler because it had a tendency to get “too hot” in the building that had been constructed to house it. Cutting into the concrete slab and putting in a six foot fan would have altered the visual site of the building, but a retreatant saved the day by suggesting that Father Berlo simply install a window fan, because the air “draft would always follow the wall.” Once it was completed, Father Berlo double-checked with a cigar. “He blew [the smoke] into the air and watched it go around, and just as the man said it would. And that solved the ventilation problem.”

•Did Riverdale’s architecture affect maintenance?

In retrospect, Brother Federspiel admits maintenance at Riverdale was unlike that of a traditional late 19th and early 20th century Passionist monastery. The challenges were totally new. For example, never before had he been asked to clean ribbon windows, nor had he worked with carpeting. Care for commercial air conditioning was a new adventure. The hilly Riverdale landscape required appropriate machinery and on the job concentration to mow. Like preachers debating the way to preach a retreat, vendors had opinions on how to maintain a terrazzo floor. “It was just different. It was a step above what we were ever trained to do.” After all, in Dunkirk, New York he had used coal for heat!

Riverdale: Urban peace and beauty

Brother Federspiel admits that he came to love Riverdale, especially from the late 1970s till the early 1990s when he lived with the small Passionist community that surrounded Passionist Father Tom Berry at the Riverdale Center of Religious Research (the old Allien Estate). In particular, he liked to cross the bridge down near The College of Mount St. Vincent and walk along the water between the railroad track and the water to the Metro North Station He and Father Berry loved to walk the walk and meet people from St. Margaret’s Parish. “It was kind of friendly place.”

Personally, I found Brother Federspiel answered a good many of my questions. Knowledge about maintenance as ministry adds depth to the 40th celebration of Cardinal Spellman Retreat House.

(Fr. Regan: continued from page 4)

actual building of Riverdale. First, as mentioned above, he was not on the Passionist building commission. Second, he believes Passionist leadership at the time thought he lacked required consultative experience, because he had “never run a retreat house.”

•What do you remember most about starting retreat promotion?

In the beginning, Father Regan knew only a couple of parishes would have the numbers to fill the entire retreat house. Personal promotion was key. He made at least five visits to every parish before he considered a “parish was in my back pocket. To the pastor, to a group, bring them here, form a leadership, and then have a day of recollection for that group. And then, after that, the leadership of the parish was in the hands of the parish men, so I seldom went back to it.” Whereas the Staten Island, New York Jesuit Manresa Retreat House relied upon developed associations with Catholic professionals such as doctors and lawyers, the Passionists recruited from parish organizations.

Overall, parish relationships were “excellent.” Cardinal Spellman and especially Cardinal Terence Cook never tired of bringing people to visit Riverdale. Father Regan had about 90 of an expected 100 parishes under the retreat house umbrella when it opened in 1967. First year of operations lost \$3,000, which “was nothing,” says Regan. Ministry on weekend retreats and weekday high school programs gave him one day off each week.

•What was the average age of the retreatants in the late 1960s?

“We never brought in the crowd in their 30s,” says Regan, adding that they were too busy. The youngest tended to be men in their 40s. In time, Father Regan came to the conclusion that “the promoter brings in people who are within five years of his age group, so the 50-year-old man is in contact with the 45 and 55.” So the hope was always to find at least one or two young promoters. Although promotion in newspapers, parish bulletins or even preaching in the pulpit was important, it was just as important for the men themselves to be in a “sociable situation” where there was the opportunity to make a personal retreat invitation via phone calls or socials. The speaker’s bureau emerged later as a way to inspire the men “to become leaders and promoters” to draw recruits for the next year.

•What about the theology of retreats in the late 1960s?

There was no team ministry. Passionist Father Cyril Schweinberg was the first retreat preacher, so Father

Regan could concentrate on organization, promotion and administration. Interestingly, Father Regan says this was a time of “defensive theology” in that the Passionist retreat was defending implementation of the directives of the Second Vatican Council! For example, retreatants saw an instructional liturgy video on the history of changes in Mass. It illuminated many men who thought that “Jesus had never changed it.” Second, he remembers the words of Passionist Father Joe Leo Flynn, who founded the West Hartford, Connecticut retreat house: “New Yorkers are more conservative than they are in Hartford.” Consequently, there were a lot of “problems” that the Riverdale retreat movement had to contend with, in particular were the race relations as perceived by Italian retreatants from Yonkers as well as the result from Vatican II. Says Father Regan, “[There were] changes taking place. And we were probably in a defensive mode and giving a positive turn to what was happening.” In other words, Father Regan reminds us that the post-Vatican II period was a time when many people wanted change and many people did not want change. Being a time of many theological moods Cardinal Spellman Retreat offered a place of education and spiritual stability for people in the parishes.

•Why did you leave the retreat house?

Living in 2007 at the Passionist Residence where he had first lived in 1965 allowed Father Regan to answer the question in a reflective manner. Recalling how he was always excited and animated by those early years of administration, preaching, providing the sacraments, and pastoral ministry, he admits that “after seven years I had ground down.” Election to Passionist provincial leadership in 1971 made him “very happy” as he found he was “being eaten up” by the time demanded by the men and increasingly women at Cardinal Spellman Retreat. He and they had come to depend on each other. Father Regan knew a new moment was on the horizon for him and other Passionists. How were they to help Riverdale retreatants live their faith in “age of the laity” in the years ahead?



Archives

Notes

- From March 15-16 Fr. Rob attended the Robert Morrison conference and presented a paper on “Missionaries and Diplomats: An Introduction to the Understanding of Twentieth Century Catholic Missionary Cases in National Archives II in the United States, College Park, Maryland.”
- From April 13-14 Fathers Rob and John J. O'Brien, C.P. attended the Shaping American Catholicism Conference in honor of David J. O'Brien at the College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, Massachusetts.



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It is the intention of the Commission to present material that will be both interesting and informative. We want to make better known the story of our Congregation and especially of our own Province; the Passionists, lay people and benefactors who made it, the immense labors they undertook in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ's Passion, and their successes and failures. We also want to look at the present situation of the Province through the eyes of Faith to try to ascertain what lessons, if any, history may be able to teach us as we try to understand our present moment and the future.

We hope to make this an **international** newsletter and so we welcome contributions from our readers of **any** Province. If you have any interesting stories or reflections or even questions that you are willing to share with us, we beg you to do so.

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